

All four scenes are characterised by – either emotional or situational – excess, pointing at a narrative lying beneath all acts: that of a patriarchal order sustained by lies, secrets and taboos. In this respect, the invisible, central camera can be identified with the phantom of the father, witnessing the afterlife of his family, of family members isolated in a visually compartmentalised interior space. This is only one of the multiple allegories of the film: besides the already mentioned parallel (his)stories and alter ego constructions as well as the ritualistic enactment of resurrection, this family melodrama becomes, on the basis of the *pars pro toto* logic, a social allegory of a post-communist society, whose father, although dead, still manages to castrate his sons before they are able to fight back and reverse the castrating act. In this respect, the true story of a publicly happy family, that of a father cheating on the mother with the apparent approval of the latter, is also the story of a generation socialised under communism and charged too early with the secrets, taboos and lies of their fathers. Although they were promised a new beginning, this generation of unwilling accomplices had great difficulties in accomplishing the liberating Oedipal act after the change of the regime. Lary's confession at least foregrounds the possibility that the sin of the father will not be repeated. But this is as uncertain as the meaning of the title of the film: *Sieranevada*.

Teréz Vincze

My space – *Sieranevada*

I had been in Asia and watching a lot but only Asian movies for several months before I coincidentally ran into *Sieranevada* at a film festival in Taiwan. This undoubtedly great movie had an even more accelerated effect on me under the given circumstances. The sudden strong and uncanny feeling of familiarity that struck me in that movie theatre of the foreign city while watching *Sieranevada* was not only the consequence of the difference between the Romanian movie and the Asian movies I had been watching all those months before. It was also related to the profound experience of living for some time in a foreign space, a different climate where the speed of everyday life, the construction of private and public spaces seemed significantly different from my previous experiences. This film almost magically, in the blink of an eye, transported me back into a familiar space.

Thanks to the above circumstances *Sieranevada* has become, first and foremost, a space-related experience for me, and I became interested in the spatial constructions present in the film, and the cinematic meaning created in connection with spaces and spatial practices.

The title of the film already feels deeply symbolic in this context: a misspelled version of a name that could designate a place either on the American or the European continent, meanwhile designating a Romanian film that takes place in Romania and seems to have no connection of any sort to any of the Sierra Nevadas. The motif of misplacement and displacement, the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of spaces and places in the film gained extra significance for me.

In a sense, the flat in *Sieranevada* is a container of history: the remnants of the past linger in the very compressed space of a high-rise building that was constructed during communist times. One of the most amazing aspects of this film is the way it is able to fill every corner of this complicated and compressed space with life, East European history, social relations, and emotional tensions. It is clear from the very first shot of the film that crowdedness, the meaningful use of spatiality will play a crucial role throughout the film. The first scene itself is a strong commentary about the lack of space, the crowded, chaotic environment of a city street where it is impossible to properly park a car.

But most of the time during the film we are – together with the members of an extended family – squeezed into a flat of a high rise. The flat has a meaningful geometry, there is a central hall that the rooms are connected to more or less directly. Although, the space is far from simple. But the basic structure is built around this central space and there are numerous rooms around, most of them are constantly hiding behind closed doors. The image of closed doors, or closing doors is a constant motif of the film that makes the seemingly simple space more labyrinthine, more mysterious. The camera often finds itself locked into the central hall and waiting to gain access into one of the rooms where differing micro dramas are developing. Behind each door some kind of a hiding story is waiting to be discovered. The different spaces contain a different atmosphere and different stories.

The kitchen plays a crucial role – from the beginning it is accentuated that its door has to be kept closed. Even though there is a constant movement in and out, the actors accurately close the door behind themselves each time. Later it becomes clear that this motif has a highly symbolic meaning: a major ideological tension, one that is at the core of understanding post-communism, is behind this door. The post-communist view on the ideology of communism, and the relationship to the achievements of communism – this problem is "hiding" behind the kitchen door. The clash between the communist aunt and the royalist niece takes place in the kitchen – and this scene is one of the important comments made by the film on the post-

communist situation. One of the arguments the aunt uses in defence of the communist regime is that it made affordable housing available for common people – indirectly saying that the flat itself they are in at that moment, exists and can be inhabited by its current owners thanks to the communists. Labelling the space as a communist construction – this gesture makes the space of the flat even more loaded with meaning, and a container of the remnants of history. People are constantly moving dynamically back and forth in the space of the flat like balls in a pinball machine. The whole flat is a vibrant chaos of personal and historic memories and tensions. For the main character, Lary, this place is unable to provide a proper space for real, personal remembering. Although the family is gathered here to commemorate the deceased father, all the circumstances (family conflicts, ideological fight, the absence of the priest, the wrong sized memorial suit) seem to work against the success of this memorial process. Larry himself needs to leave this space, loaded with history and emotion, in order to be able to start his personal remembering.

Towards the end of the film, he sits together with his wife in their car and there is a construction site in the background. This space is also tight, but at the same time looks on an open space. And what is more important on the level of the meaning of spaces: this is a modern space, the interior of a modern car that is not necessarily associated with all the symbolic weight that the crowded flat exerted on its guests.

For me, this film is an example of the power of spatial constructions in meaning production. Its systematic and symbolic use of cinematic spatiality makes this film a forceful container of the memory of an East European past, and an unmistakably post-communist take on everyday existence. *Sieranevada* presents remembering as a characteristically spatial construction, a filmic choreography achieved through composition and editing.

Katalin Sándor

From the Back Seat of the Car – Space and Intimacy

In what follows, I will focus on two scenes from Cristi Puiu's *Sieranevada* in which the characters are filmed inside their car. In the broader context of the film's construction of diegetic space, the space of the car can be interpreted as a particular site for negotiating intimacy in-between the public and the private on the one hand, and the camera's gaze, the diegetic world and the viewer on the other.